

**IN THE SPECIFICATION:**

The following amendment was requested in the Amendment of 24 March 2003 but does not appear to have been entered. If it has been entered, please disregard the following.

Kindly replace the paragraph beginning at Page 19, line 25 with the following paragraph:

Laminin  $\alpha 4$  gene-specific polynucleotides, including laminin  $\alpha 4$ -specific mRNA species, are determined by base sequence similarity or homology to known mammalian laminin  $\alpha 4$ -specific nucleotide sequences. Base sequence homology is determined by conducting a base sequence similarity search of a genomics data base, such as the GenBank database of the National Center for Biotechnology Information (~~NCBI; www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/BLAST~~), using a computerized algorithm, such as PowerBLAST, QBLAST, PSI-BLAST, PHI-BLAST, gapped or ungapped BLAST, or the "Align" program through the Baylor College of Medicine server (~~www.hgsc.bcm.tmc.edu/seq\_data~~). (E.g., Altschul, S.F., *et al.*, *Gapped BLAST and PSI-BLAST: a new generation of protein database search programs*, Nucleic Acids Res. 25(17):3389-402 [1997]; Zhang, J., & Madden, T.L., *PowerBLAST: a new network BLAST application for interactive or automated sequence analysis and annotation*, Genome Res. 7(6):649-56 [1997]; Madden, T.L., *et al.*, *Applications of network BLAST server*, Methods Enzymol. 266:131-41 [1996]; Altschul, S.F., *et al.*, *Basic local alignment search tool*, J. Mol. Biol. 215(3):403-10 [1990]). Preferably, a laminin  $\alpha 4$ -specific polynucleotide sequence, including an mRNA sequence, is at least 5 to 30 contiguous nucleotides long, more preferably at least 6 to 15 contiguous nucleotides long, and most preferably at least 7 to 10 contiguous nucleotides long. Preferably, the laminin  $\alpha 4$ -specific mRNA is at least about 45 contiguous nucleotides long. A laminin  $\alpha 4$ -specific mRNA can be, but is not necessarily, an mRNA species containing a nucleotide sequence that encodes a functional laminin  $\alpha 4$  subunit or a fragment thereof. Also included among laminin  $\alpha 4$ -specific mRNAs are splice variants.